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Written Proponent Testimony

SB 32 - Kansas Challenge to Secondary School Students Act

Presented to the House Education Committee
Wednesday, March 17, 2021

By
Deena Horst and Ben Jones, Legislative Liaisons
Kansas State Board of Education

Chairman Huebert, Vice Chairman Thomas, Ranking Minority Stogsdill and Members of the Committee,

At its December 2020 meeting, the Kansas State Board of Education, by general consensus, established positions on existing and potential legislative issues of educational interest. One of those positions is the following: "Supports the goal of moving toward providing tuition-free, the first 15 postsecondary credit hours during high school."

SB 32 amends existing statutes within the Kansas Challenge to Secondary School Students Act which relate to postsecondary education and the ability of secondary students to enroll either concurrently in postsecondary classes or dually enroll in both secondary and postsecondary courses. In addition, SB 32 allows school districts to pay for their secondary students' tuition and fees related to their students' postsecondary education. Other components of the bill require tuition waivers for foster children who are enrolled in postsecondary courses and a required annual report submitted to the Board of Regents from each postsecondary institution accepting secondary school students. The Board of Regents must compile the data received and annually submit to the House and Senate Standing Committees on Education a summary of the reports received.

The bill updates language and adds individual plans of study and individualized education program as a qualification for secondary students to access postsecondary coursework. It also requires that institutions inform a student or the student's parent or guardian when the course in which the student is enrolled may not transfer to other post-secondary institutions.

(continued)

While the State Board of Education position prefers the idea that the state specifically provide the funds to cover tuition and fees for secondary school students' dual or concurrent postsecondary enrollment, we support the provision in this bill which allows the board of education of each Kansas School District, at their discretion, to pay all or a portion of the negotiated amount of tuition and related costs, including the related costs which aren't waived for an eligible foster child. The bill also allows school districts to provide transportation to and from eligible postsecondary educational institutions. It is our view that this is a step in the right direction in our quest to provide a means for all secondary students to have access to a postsecondary education regardless of their socio-economic standing. There is data showing that providing such access to a postsecondary education is paramount in convincing first-generation postsecondary students that they indeed are capable of pursuing a postsecondary education. As has been often stated, we know that we need a larger number of our student population to pursue a postsecondary education, whether it be to acquire a certificate or to earn a degree. Our primary concern is that this provision will not be available to all Kansas secondary students because they attend a high school in a district that does not have the funds available to provide such access, thus creating inequities in access.

It would be our hope that the Legislature will continue to pursue a way to provide tuition and fee waivers for all eligible secondary school students so secondary students in all school districts may participate in the Kansas Challenge to Secondary Students Act.

Thank you for your consideration of SB 32.